

OPERANT CONDITIONING

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DEFINITION

- **Operant conditioning**, sometimes called instrumental conditioning or Skinnerian conditioning, is a method of learning that uses rewards and punishment to modify behavior.
- Through operant conditioning, behavior that is **rewarded** is likely to be **repeated**, while behavior that is **punished** is prone to happen **less**.
- Operant conditioning was first described by psychologist **B.F. Skinner**.
- His theory was based on **two** assumptions.
- **First**, the cause of human behavior is something in a person's environment.
- **Second**, the consequences of a behavior determine the possibility of it being repeated.
- **Behaviors** followed by a **pleasant consequence** are likely to be **repeated** and those followed by an **unpleasant consequence** are **less** likely to be repeated.

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- Through his experiments, Skinner identified **three types of responses** that followed behavior:
 - **Neutral responses.** They are responses from the environment that produce no stimulus other than focusing attention. They neither increase nor decrease the probability of a behavior being repeated.
 - **Reinforcers.** They are responses from the environment that increase the likelihood of a behavior being repeated. They can either be positive or negative.
 - **Punishers.** These are negative operants that decrease the likelihood of a behavior. Punishment weakens behavior.

Operant Conditioning

Reinforcement

Positive

(stimulus presented)

+

Behavior
increases

Negative

(stimulus removed)

-

Behavior
increases

Punishment

Positive

(stimulus presented)

+

Behavior
decreases

Negative

(stimulus removed)

-

Behavior
decreases

REINFORCEMENT

- **Reinforcement** is any event that **strengthens** or **increases** the behavior it follows.
- There are two kinds of reinforcers. In both of these cases of reinforcement, the behavior **increases**.
- **Positive Reinforcement** – are favorable events or outcomes that are presented after the behavior. In positive reinforcement situations, a response or behavior is strengthened by the **addition** of praise or a **direct reward**.
- **Negative Reinforcement** – involve the removal of an **unfavorable events** or **outcomes** after the display of a behavior. In these situations, a response is **strengthened** by the **removal** of something considered unpleasant.

PUNISHMENT

- **Punishment** is the presentation of an **adverse event** or **outcome** that causes a **decrease** in the behavior it follows.
- There are two kinds of punishment. In both of these cases, the behavior **decreases**.
- **Positive Punishment** – sometimes called punishment by **application**, presents an unfavorable event or outcome to **weaken** the response it **elicits**.
- **Spanking** for misbehavior is an example of punishment by application.
- **Negative Punishment** – also known as punishment by **removal**, occurs when a **favorable event** or **outcome** is **removed** after a behavior occurs.
- Taking away a child's video game following misbehavior is an example of negative punishment.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CLASSICAL CONDITIONING AND OPERANT CONDITIONING

CLASSICAL CONDITIONING

VS

OPERANT CONDITIONING



learning through association



pairing of stimuli



involuntary response



Ivan Pavlov



learning through consequences



reinforcement or punishment



voluntary behavior



B.F. Skinner